

# The ORANGE FREE STATE REPUBLIC

SOUTH AFRICA



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# Orange Free State

(REPUBLIC.)

SOUTH AFRICA.

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CHICAGO:  
RAND, McNALLY & Co., PRINTERS,  
1893.



# The Orange Free State.

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## ITS BOUNDARIES.

This State, which forms one of the two independent republics of South Africa, is bounded on the south by the Orange River, dividing it from the Cape Colony; on the north by the Vaal River, separating it from the South African Republic (or Transvaal); on the east by Basutoland and the Drakensbergen, dividing it from the colony of Natal, and on the west by Griqualand West, better known as the "Diamond Fields."

## ITS PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY.

The Free State is an extensive table-land, about 400 miles in length from north to south, and about 200 miles in breadth from east to west, extending over an area of about 50,000 square miles, and lying at an average altitude of 4,000 feet above the level of the sea. Its capital, Bloemfontein, is situated 750 miles north of Table Bay, 450 miles north of Port Elizabeth, and 400 miles north of East London; while the town of Harrismith, which lies twenty-two miles away from the northeastern boundary of the State, is 150 miles distant from Port Natal.

The country slopes gradually from the Drakensbergen on the east to the valley of the Vaal River on its northern and western boundaries. Only in the eastern portion of the State mountain ranges occur, while in the southern parts detached hills or "kopjes" are here and there seen upon the otherwise level plains, and in the north and northwest the country consists of extensive undulating prairies, from which, at long intervals, rise solitary sugar-loaf or cone-shaped hills.

These prairies were formerly covered with coarse grass. Toward the south, however, a scrubby bush, well suited for sheep, and in some places a sweeter kind of grass take the place of the "sour" or coarser grasses.

The country is now comparatively treeless, although there are indications of this not having always been the case. Along the

mountain-sides and in the valleys of the rivers many trees are still to be found, these being principally the mimosa thorn, the wild olive, the willow, and the camel-thorn (a species of wild acacia).

The greater portion of the country is best suited for cattle and sheep breeding, although the eastern part of the State, bordering upon Basutoland, and consisting of a tract of country about 30 miles broad and 100 miles long, is second to no soil in the world in its grain-producing quality. Portions of it have been known to produce eightyfold of the wheat sown—the average production is thirtyfold—and this without irrigation, and without manure during a period of thirty consecutive years. For how much longer than thirty years this extraordinary yield might continue is as yet unknown, since this strip of land known as the “Conquered Territory” (having been conquered from the Basutos) has only been under cultivation during the time above stated. When this territory shall, in due time, be served by the requisite railways, and be cultivated in a proper manner to its full extent, it bids fair not only to be the granary of the Orange Free State and of the Transvaal (as it already is), but also to supply other portions of South Africa, and even the European markets, with bread. Besides cattle, horses, woolled-sheep, angora goats, ostriches, and the various kinds of grain, such as wheat, oats, barley, maize, and kaffir-corn, the country is capable of producing, and does produce at present, to a limited extent, various kinds of fruit, among which, peaches, pears, apples, and grapes seem best adapted to the nature of the soil.

#### MINERALS.

Good coal is found in the northern districts of Heilbron and Kroonstad, between the Rhenoster and Vaal rivers, while fair deposits have been discovered along the valley of the Sand River in the district of Winburg. Indications of reef or quartz gold have been found in the north, though as yet little or no success has attended the efforts to open up mines of the precious metals.

Iron ore (magnetic) abounds in the neighborhood of the coal beds. Natural cement in great abundance is found in the districts of Ladybrand and Bethlehem; saltpeter and ochre in the neighborhood of the Wittebergen (or White) Mountains and the Caledon River district, while in the same localities fossil remains of trees, fish, and the *Dicynodon* (a reptile somewhat similar to the Iguana, and having two long canine teeth) are found in large quantities.

Diamonds are dug to a considerable and daily increasing amount in the mines of Jagersfontein and Koffiefontein, both situ-



ated in the district of Fauresmith, in the southwestern portion of the State.

To illustrate the importance of this industry the following extracts from the reports of the government inspectors of these two mines for the month of January, 1893, may be referred to.

The government inspector of Jagersfontein reports in February, over the month of January, 1893: "The output of diamonds in January amounted to 15,189 carats, valued at £29,451 18s. 3d.," or about \$143,426, while the mine inspector of Koffiefontein states "that the yield of that mine during the same period was 1,484 carats, valued at £2,117 10s.," or \$10,300. He further reports, "that on February 7, 1893, all the claims in the mine, consisting of 1,473, had been taken up, whereas previous to that date only about four hundred were taken, and only two or three small companies had done any work."

It is therefore to be hoped that this mine will now also be fairly tested, and possibly in time give as good results as Jagersfontein. It is believed that around Koffiefontein mine there are still fully a dozen diamond mines awaiting development, so that a great future is no doubt in store for the country lying between the Jagersfontein Railway station and Kimberley.

#### POPULATION.

According to the census of 1890, which is, however, not very accurate, the population consists of 207,503 souls, of which 77,716 are whites and 129,787 blacks (Basutos and Barolongs). The number of burghers, between the ages of eighteen and sixty years liable according to law to be called out in time of war, is 17,381.

#### INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.

The revenue of the State is about £370,000 per annum, and the expenditure about the same. This revenue is derived chiefly from the following sources, viz.: Quit-rent on farms at the rate of 2 shillings per "100 morgen," or 200 acres, transfer dues on unmovable or "fixed" property at the rate of 4 per cent, and on movables at the rate of 2 per cent on all goods sold by public auction, capitations or "hut" tax on natives at the rate of 10 shillings per head or hut, to which must be added the sum of over £100,000 derived from customs dues, which are levied on all goods imported over sea at the rate of 12 per cent *ad valorem* on ordinary articles of commerce. These dues are levied by the Cape Colony at colonial harbors by virtue of a treaty existing between the Orange Free State

and the said Colony, and on the Natal border by customs officers appointed by the State in accordance with the provisions of the customs union existing between the State and the Cape Colony, the latter retaining 3 per cent out of the 12 to recoup itself for the expenses of collection. The public expenditure is devoted to the costs connected with the civil, legislative, educational, and judicial departments, and to the construction of public works, the annual expenses being for roads £25,000, for bridges £50,000, and during the past three years there has been expended for public buildings £30,000 annually.

Of the entire revenue of the State nearly one-third is thus absorbed by educational grants and public works, a financial record which probably no other country in the world can boast of.

#### EDUCATION.

The education of the children of the State is one of the chief objects the government has kept in view. A permanent fund, amounting to £200,000, has been set aside for this purpose. The head of this department is the superintendent of education, who has inspectors and sub-inspectors under him.

During the school-year 1890-91 there were in the Orange Free State (exclusive of non-aided private) 71 government schools, with 110 teachers, at which the pupils numbered 3,000, while the expenditure exceeded £15,000. The government schools are divided into town, ward, and peripatetic schools, and the teachers into first, second, and third class, according to certificates obtained by them from the board of examiners.

This board consists of nine members, appointed by the president, and has power to grant certificates of proficiency in law, land surveying, and in science and literature generally. The "Grey College" and "Dames Institute" (or Ladies' Seminary) at Bloemfontein, are as yet the only schools supported by government devoted to higher education, the students of which are prepared for the matriculation of the Cape University, so that those youths who desire to carry their studies further, are obliged to proceed to either the South African College in Cape Town, or the Victoria College at Stellenbosch.

RELIGION.—The large majority of the population are members of the Dutch Reformed church, which community has a congregation in almost every little village of the State. This sect is supported by the government to the extent of £6,000 per annum, which amount is paid over to the synod of the church to dispose of as it



may deem fit. The synod meets at Bloemfontein every second year in the month of May, and consists of the clergyman and one elder of each congregation. The Anglicans, Wesleyans, Lutherans, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics have also churches and schools in different towns and villages.

The Anglican denomination possesses many churches, and have erected, especially in the capital, many school buildings, of which St. Andrews College (for boys) and St. Michael's Home (for girls) are the most important. Most of the above-named denominations also receive small grants in aid from the government. In addition to these should also be mentioned the Separatist Dutch church, which has several churches and congregations in the State.

At Witzieshoek the Dutch Reformed church has established a mission. At Bethany, Mabolela (in the district of Ladybrand), and at several other places, the Berlin Mission Society has erected mission churches and schools, while the Wesleyans and Anglicans have similar institutions in the district of Maroka and in other parts of the country.

#### ANIMALS AND PLANTS.

The principal wild animals that are still to be found in the State are antelopes of various kinds, such as the *wilde beest*, *blesbok*, spring-buck, etc., hares, ant-eaters, armadillos, wild-cats, mier-cats, porcupines, hedgehogs, jackals, hyenas, and wild dogs, the latter three being, however, fortunately almost extinct. Tortoises of various kind are numerous. Of birds there are the wild peacock (pauw), the korhaan, the kieviet (or plover), guinea-fowl, pheasants (a small variety found only along the Valsch and Vaal rivers), partridges, wild geese, wild ducks of different varieties, the coot (or water hen), wild muscovy ducks, the mahem crane, secretary bird, and the great locust bird, which is identical with the European stork. The smaller birds and the vultures, eagles, and hawks existing in the Orange Free State are the same species as those found in the Cape Colony.

The rivers of the country abound in fish, among which we have the barber *Clarius capensis* (which are only found in the Orange River and its tributaries), and sometimes attaining a length of six or seven feet, having very few bones and no scales, and distinguished by its large and hideous head, and eight *cirri*, or feelers, attached to its underlips. Besides this there is also the *yellow fish*, found in all Free State rivers, and sometimes weighing from eighteen to twenty pounds. In addition to these there are the calveshead, the undermouth, and the whitefish, etc.

Besides fish, the rivers also contain the "iguana" and the river turtle.

The principal snakes are the puff-adder (*Vipera arietaus*), the brown and yellow cobra (*Naia haje*), and the "spitting-snake," which can eject its poison with accuracy to a distance of three or four yards, so that any one standing to leeward of the reptile runs great danger of having the poison squirted into his eye, being thereby rendered temporarily blind.

There are also "schaapsteker," or sheepstinger (*Rhombeatus*), the tree-snake (*Dentrophis*), and others similar to those found in the Cape Colony.

Among the reptiles there are also various kinds of "salamanders" (*Cordyli*), of which the largest is the "hook-tail" (*Cordylus giganteus*), sometimes more than a foot in length.

Among the indigenous trees of the country we have the *mimosa*, the *karee*, the *wild olive*, and the *camelthorn*. Of shrubs peculiar to the country are the elands-bean, used for tanning; the saffron (*Crocus africanus*); and the wild-cork, of the northern districts, the roots of which are used as floats for fish-nets.

Of grasses there are at least thirty distinct varieties to be found throughout the State.

Although in the "Conquered Territory," along the eastern border, wild-flowers exist, yet the Free State, as a whole, has not a rich flora.

#### THE CLIMATE.

The climate of the Orange Free State is, in consequence of its altitude and the inland position of the country, dryer and colder than that of the neighboring countries. The State is therefore very healthy, especially for those suffering from weak lungs. The summer is the wet and the winter the dry season of the year, but, owing to its geographical position, the rainfall is variable, and thus droughts are apt to occur occasionally, the liability to which naturally has a detrimental effect upon agriculture and commerce.

#### MOUNTAINS, RIVERS, AND PANS.

As already stated, it is only on the eastern borders that mountains deserving of the name are met with, the principal ranges being the "Wittebergen" (or White Mountains), the "Roode" (or Red) Mountains, and the "Drakensbergen" (or Dragon Mountains). The two former lie in the districts of Bethlehem and Harismith, while the latter forms the boundary between the Free State and the colony of Natal. It is in this range that the "Mont aux

Sources" (or Mount of Sources, so called from the number of rivers having their sources in it) rises to a height of nearly eleven thousand feet above the level of the sea.

None of the rivers of this country are navigable. The Orange, the Vaal, and the Caledon rivers, forming respectively the southern, northern, and eastern boundaries of the State, are the three chief streams. In winter the flow of the rivers is weak, owing to the absence of rain, so that during that season of the year the rivers consist principally of large and deep water-holes, called sea-cow—or hippopotamus—holes, with "drifts" or fords here and there, over which the water flows in a weak and shallow stream. During summer, however, the rivers are often not only impassable, but most dangerous, for as the country lies at so high a level above the sea, and as thunder-storms are frequent, the water not only rushes down in its course to the sea with great rapidity, but also sometimes rises above its ordinary level to a height of from ten to twenty feet in the course of a single night.

"Pans" are peculiar circular depressions in the ground, found mainly in the "Middleveld," or water-shed, of two rivers. Some of these pans contain salt, several of which are in the Boshoff, Jacobsdal, Fauresnith, and Bloemfontein districts. One of these, about four hours' drive, or twenty-six miles, from Bloemfontein, is the most remarkable. It is called Hagans-Pan, is about two miles in diameter, and is now being worked by the "Mercantile & Salt Company," under the direction of Mr. E. Lissack, which corporation exports a large quantity of salt to the gold-fields of Johannesburg. The salt is, according to Professor Hahn's analysis, the best in the world.

The salt is won by making a trench in the pan about eight or nine feet deep. The brine which percolates into the trench is then pumped onto large "buck" or tent sails, where it evaporates, and leaves the salt as sediment.

#### FISCAL DIVISIONS.

The whole country is divided into nineteen districts, each presided over by a magistrate, or "*landdrost*," while each district is subdivided into one, two, or more wards, each of which returns a member to the legislature, or *volksraad*. In addition to the ward members, each district town sends one member to the *volksraad*.

#### GOVERNMENT.

The government of the republic is delegated by the people

to the legislature, or *volksraad*; the executive, with the president as its responsible head, assisted and advised by an executive council; and by the high court, consisting of a chief justice and two puisne judges.

#### HISTORY.

The country which now constitutes the Orange Free State was first peopled by white men in the year 1835, these settlers consisting at first of those emigrant farmers who left the Cape Colony for the purpose of seeking a new home north of the Orange River. A portion of the emigrants of 1835-38 traveled as far north as Port Natal, and beyond the Vaal River, founding there what now is the colony of Natal and the South African Republic (or Transvaal), but the remnant preferred the plains lying between the Orange River on the south and the Vaal River on the north, and these occupied the territory which eventually became the Orange Free State. These emigrant farmers found the country practically uninhabited excepting by roving bands of Bushmen and Korannas.

They organized a crude form of self-government under the name of the Company (or "*Maatschappij*"), but in the year 1847 the then governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Harry Smith, proclaimed the country lying between the Vaal and Orange rivers as British territory, under the name of the "*Sovereignty*," placing a resident at Bloemfontein, the capital.

From 1847 to 1854 the Sovereignty remained under the administration of the British residents. In 1854, however, owing to constant and increasing disputes between the emigrant farmers and the surrounding native tribes of Basutos and Griquas, the British government saw fit to withdraw its control to the south bank of the Orange River, handing over its functions to delegates who, on behalf of the people of the country, entered into a convention with Great Britain.

This convention, known as the Convention of Bloemfontein, was signed on the 23d of February, 1854, and by its provisions the "*Orange River Territory*" became an independent state.

The principal provisions of this convention stipulated that the inhabitants were thenceforth absolved from their allegiance to the Crown of England; that the British government would have no alliances with native chiefs living to the north of the Orange River, excepting with the Griqua Chief, Adam Kok; that the new government would guarantee the right of property and the personal and legal rights of all British subjects then resident in the country.. It also provided for mutual extradition, the establishment of courts of



law, that (as heretofore) no slavery should be allowed, and that the government of the territory should have the right of purchasing ammunition in any colony of South Africa. On the 10th of April, 1854, a constitution was adopted by the *volksraad*. It was based upon that of the United States of America, in so far as that instrument was applicable to the condition and circumstances of the State.

The principal provisions were, that any white man who had lived in the country six months before the 10th of April, 1854, should be deemed a citizen, with the right of voting for president or a member of the *volksraad*. The *volksraad*, or legislature, to consist of one member for each ward, and one for each district town, to be elected by the burghers entitled to vote.

A president, to be elected for five years by all enfranchised burghers, was to be the responsible head of the executive, and he was to be assisted and advised by an executive council consisting of the "*landdrost*" (magistrate) of Bloemfontein, the government secretary, and three unofficial members to be elected by the *volksraad*. The Roman Dutch law was to be common law, in accordance with which, in the absence of any statutory enactment, the courts were to decide all cases.

The law was to be equally administered, without respect of persons, and the rights of property, personal freedom, and liberty of the press were guaranteed by the constitution.

This fundamental law could only be amended or repealed by the consent of three-fourths of the Legislature in two consecutive annual sessions of that body. On the 9th of March, 1866, and on the 8th of May, 1879, the constitution of 1854 was revised and reënacted, but the main features of the original constitution, as above described, have remained unaltered.

From the year 1854 to the present time, a period of nearly thirty-nine years, the Orange Free State has maintained its republican form of government, and has during that time had five presidents, viz.: Josias Philippus Hoffman, from the 13th of September, 1854, to the 10th of February, 1855; Jacobus Nicolaas Boshoff, from the 27th of August, 1855, to the 6th of September, 1859; Martinus Wessel Pretorius, from the 19th of February, 1860, to the 17th of February, 1863; Johannes Hendrikus Brand, who was reëlected State president five times, from the 2d of July, 1868, to the 14th of July, 1888, and Francis William Reitz, who was sworn in on the 10th of January, 1889, and whose term of office will expire during the course of the current year.



The principal events during these thirty-eight years were:

*Firstly.* The Basuto wars, which continued, with intervals of peace, from 1858 until 1868 (a period of ten years), and terminated in the complete triumph of the Free State. The Basutos were eventually reduced to such straits that Sir Philip Woodhouse, the then high commissioner of the Cape Colony, in order to prevent the absorption of Basutoland by the Orange Free State, at the urgent solicitation of Moshesh, the paramount chief of this tribe, proclaimed that part Basutoland which had not yet been actually occupied by the inhabitants of the State as a portion of the British empire.

*Second.* The annexation in 1871 by the British government of Griqualand West, or the "Diamond Fields," a territory under the nominal rule of the Griqua chief Waterboer, but to which the Free State laid claim, as having been ceded to it by purchase, by a former Griqua chief, whose successor Waterboer pretended to be. Eventually the British government agreed to pay to the Orange Free State as a "solatium," or compensation for the loss of this ground, the sum of £90,000, which was agreed to; and

*Lastly.* The customs union and railway convention entered into between the Cape Colony and the Orange Free State in 1889. By a former treaty it was agreed that the Cape Colony should levy at its ports 12 per cent *ad valorem* on all general merchandise imported over sea, and to pay over to the government of the State three-fourths of such import duties levied on all goods imported into the Orange Free State, the parties to the union agreeing that no goods should be admitted within the borders of the union at any other tariff than that agreed upon between the contracting parties.

By the railway convention it was agreed that the government of the Cape Colony should build a railway through the Free State at its own cost and risk, at a stated sum per mile, over which line goods and passengers should be carried at a tariff agreed upon, the State to have the option of taking over the line at any time after its completion, at the stated sum per mile, and that during such time as the Cape government might continue to work the line the profits accruing therefrom should be equally divided between the two countries at intervals of seven years. It has been estimated that this line is, since its opening (which took place in July, 1892), bringing in a clear profit of about £160,000 per annum, this favorable condition of affairs being due to the rapid development of the gold-fields of the South African republic.

In addition to this trunk line, which connects all the harbors of

the Cape Colony with Johannesburg and Pretoria, there are two other short lines of railway within the State, the one running from the Orange River at Bethulie to a junction with the main line at Springfontein, and connecting the port of East London with the central line, and the other connecting the Natal line, from Durban over Ladysmith, with the town of Harrismith.

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The statute law of the Orange Free State, from 1854 to 1891 has been codified by a commission under the presidency of the chief justice in a volume of 876 pages, and was declared to be the law of the land by the legislature in 1892.

The principal enactments contained therein are the following:

*First.* For the establishment of higher and lower courts of law, and for regulating their procedure. These courts consist of (A) the high court, with a chief justice and two puisne judges, which hears civil cases for the district of Bloemfontein, as also (by consent) for other districts, and decides appeals, both civil and criminal, from the decisions of the circuit courts. (B) Circuit courts, presided over by one judge for the hearing of civil cases, and who, in criminal cases, is assisted by a jury consisting of nine men. (C) The *landdrost* and *heemraden* courts, consisting of the *landdrost* (or magistrate) of the district, assisted by two assessors, and having a limited jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases. (D) The *landdrost* court, over which the magistrate of the district presides, with a limited jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases. (E) The courts of the resident justice of the peace, who has limited jurisdiction, inferior to that of the *landdrost*, in smaller towns not being district towns; and (F) the special justice of the peace, who has a limited criminal jurisdiction in the ward in which he is appointed.

*Second.* By an enactment of 1854 the Dutch language was declared the official language of the State.

*Third.* The *commando* law regulates the calling out of the burghers in time of war—every male inhabitant between the ages of sixteen and sixty being made liable to such services.

In addition to this there are ordinances regulating the holding of burgher reviews (or wapenschouwings) in every district once in four years, and in every ward annually—every man between the ages of eighteen and forty being bound, under a penalty, to attend such reviews armed and mounted, the inhabitants of towns, however, not being obliged to muster mounted. By another law the government

provides each burgher with a rifle at cost price, so that a good Martini Henri rifle can be procured at £4 5s.

*Fourth.* By a law of 1889 a body of mounted police has been established, consisting of about one hundred men, who, under the direction of a commandant, are doing good service in the suppression of stock thefts, and in maintaining the proper working of the pass laws.

*Fifth.* The laws providing for the establishment of an educational department, and regulating all matters concerning government schools and private schools receiving grants in aid from the public revenue. The principal provisions of these enactments have already been stated under the heading "Education and Religion."

*Sixth.* The laws bearing upon insolvency, the orphan chamber, registration of deeds, municipalities and marriage have been copied from those of the Cape Colony and Natal, with a few unimportant alterations and additions.

*Seventh.* Other useful ordinances are those providing for masters' and servants' act, for the inclosure of farms, the management of government mines, the eradication of the *Xanthium spinosum* (a burr-weed that is very injurious to wool), and for preventing various diseases among cattle—such as scab, lung sickness, and red-water.

*Eighth.* The liquor law of this State, which was passed in 1883, and has therefore now been ten years in force, is peculiar as being to a certain extent a "Maine Liquor Law," for it prohibits entirely the sale of strong drink to natives and people of color generally, and moreover only permits the sale thereof in towns, no licenses being granted for any place outside a town.

These restrictions have undoubtedly tended to diminish drunkenness among the rural and native population in a marked degree. On the other hand it can not be denied that illicit trade in liquor has in consequence of this law increased considerably, while travelers complain of the inconvenience under which they suffer by being unable to procure accommodation along the highways of the State. On the whole, however, it must be admitted that this law has worked beneficially.

The progress of the Orange Free State during the thirty-nine years of its existence as an independent republic has been gradual but sure. Every little village has its telegraph and post office, its public offices, public schools, and teachers' dwellings. Sixteen bridges have been built over the principal rivers, and Bloemfontein possesses several very fine public buildings, such as the new post and telegraph office, the lunatic asylum and hospital, the presi-

dency, the government office, and the new *Raadzaal*. This latter building, costing £40,000 and designed in the Grecian style, will be completed at the end of April of the present year, so that the legislature will be able to hold its annual session in May next therein.

May 1, 1893.







# DISTRICTEN

- I. BLOEMFONTEIN
- II. WINBURG.
- III. CALEDONRIJTER
- IV. MOROKA
- V. ROUWVLE
- VI. WEFENER
- VII. LADYBRAND
- VIII. FICKSBURG
- IX. BETHLEHEM
- X. HARNISWITZ
- XI. VREDE
- XII. HEILBRON
- XIII. KROONSTAD
- XIV. HOOFSTAD
- XV. BOSHOFF
- XVI. JACOBSDAL
- XVII. FAURESMITH
- XVIII. PHILIPPOLIS
- XIX. BETHULIE



KAART VAN DEN  
**ORANJE VRIJSTAAT.**  
samengesteld naar documenten, berustende in  
het archief van den Landmeter-Generaal,  
door  
**J.J. HERFST** Oct. 1891

